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THE FIELDS OF DAWN

AND

LATER SONNETS

BY

LLOYD MIFFLIN

11



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NOTE

THE period referred to in these Pastorals is supposed to be in the Author's youth. The time occupied is one year — beginning with early April, running through the seasons, and ending with the following Spring. The region described is in southern Pennsylvania bordering upon the Susquehanna.

L. M.

NORWOOD, July, 1900

*How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view !
The orchard, the meadow, the deep-tangled wild wood,
And every loved spot which my infancy knew. . . .*

SAMUEL WOODWORTH.

"NOW LIKE A RED LEAF"

*In youth how slowly passed the golden day !
As if upon the stillness of some brook
You threw a rose-leaf and the rose-leaf took
Its own sweet time to loiter to the bay.
The lark sang always ; life was endless play ;
We lived on nectar from a poet's book ;
Drifting along by many a sunny nook,
Little we cared — it would be ever May ! . . .
Now, like a red leaf on the autumnal stream
That cannot steer nor stop — that cannot sink —
Swiftly I glide. As in some fateful dream
There is no time to pause — no time to think ;
The cataract roars — I see the white foam gleam
Within the gorge — it draws me to the brink !*

From " At the Gates of Song."

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THE FIELDS OF DAWN

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

I

AMONG the maple-buds we heard the tones
Of April's earliest bees, although the days
Seemed ruled by Mars. The veil of gathering haze
Spread round the silent hills in bluest zones.
Deep in the pines the breezes stirred the cones,
As on we strolled within the wooded ways,
There where the brook, transilient, softly plays
With muffled plectrum on her harp of stones ;
Onward we pushed amid the yielding green
And light rebounding of the cedar boughs,
Until we heard — the forest lanes along,
Above the lingering drift of latest snows —
The Thrush outpour, from coverts still unseen,
His rare ebulliency of liquid song !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

II

THE budding woods had many a note to thrill :
We heard the River lapping on the shore,
And from anear the pulsing of an oar
Came round the jutting shoulder of the hill ;
Deep in the rocky gorge the mountain rill,
Tumbling in torrents of melodious roar
Among primeval boulders, o'er and o'er,
Made music that from far re-echoed still.
The forest flowers, from the leafy ground,
Were peering at us with demurest eyes
'Mid ferns uncurling in the balmy air ;
And I remember on that day you found,
Apoise above the blue anemones there,
A fluttering flock of golden butterflies.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

III

WE strolled on wooded slopes above the town,
While April, coming from a sunnier land,
Strewed violets near us with her rosy hand,
And scattered coyly from her azure gown
Arbutus bells beneath the leaves of brown.
We saw her timid by the dogwood stand,
When, at the waving of her mystic wand,
It sprang to blossom in a snowy crown.
She turned to walk within the greenwood gloom
Where flows the runnel from the rocky spring —
Silent we watched her as she stepped along ;
And when she passed, the thicket burst abloom,
While to and fro flashed many a brilliant wing,
And every brier trembled with a song !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

IV

AND when the April days of sunny rain
Had raised the River and each rivulet,
When all the sandy marge was soft and wet
Where high the drifted ice of late had lain, —
We saw the fishers as they rowed amain,
Spreading in rapid pools their monstrous net ;
And rare the sight, when last the snare was set,
The dotted buoys of the circling seine.
We watched the boatmen pulling in their prize —
The silvered fish the Susquehanna yields ;
We left the sheltered tree-trunk on the shore,
And then, as balmier grew the balmy skies,
Unchained our boat beneath the sycamore,
And with the current floated to new fields.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

v

THE rhythmic music of our horses' feet
Woke the long bridge and echoed o'er the plains ;
Within the forest oft their flowing manes
Were brushed by branches where the wildings meet ;
The grape-vine's blossom in the air was sweet,
As on our saddlers' necks we dropped the reins,
And let them pick their way through rocky lanes
Along the margin of the dense retreat.
We reached the hill-top, and the late glow there
Lingered, reluctant still to leave your cheek,
Then faded slowly from the river's breast ;
While on the summit, gazing from the peak,
We watched Hyperion drive his flaming pair
Down the gold highways of the crimsoned West.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

VI

WE stooped a moment 'mid the golden hosts
Of buttercups to gather one bouquet ;
Then wandered where the dandelions' ghosts
Gloomed all the greensward with their globes of gray.
The bursting white-oak leaf, that looks in May
A silver bloom, frosted the shooting tips ;
And all the bellefleur buds were out that day
As ruby-rosy as your own dear lips !
Along the windings of the avenue
The guelder-rose displayed her spheres of light,
And eaves were purpled with wistaria flowers ;
While the faint aura, for the sake of you,
Toying among the clustered blossoms bright,
With rarest fragrance filled the balmy hours.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

VII

WITHIN the orchard in the month of May,
Where gently waved the fitful southern breeze,
We watched the blossoms snowing from the trees,
While vagrant butterflies in white array,
From out the apple shadows where we lay,
Fluttered around and seemed a part of these';
And sweetest violets clustered near our knees
Blue as the plumage of the saucy jay.
Above us in the rosy-centred blooms
The earliest robin perched and blithely sang,
Nor knew his nest was builded all too low ;
And o'er the lawn the birds on eager plumes,
Selecting sites, were hurrying to and fro,
While all the groves with wildest carols rang.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

VIII

HAPPY the idle days that then were mine
Spent on the shady slopes about the house :
The squirrels, joining in a mad carouse,
Romped o'er the red-oak through the spreading pine.
The wrens were warbling in the eglantine,
And thrushes carolled 'mid the maple boughs ;
While flecks of sunshine, falling round your brows,
Lighted your face to something half divine.
Between the branches pink with apple-blooms
Hazy and faint we marked the distant spires,
As toward the town we turned with careless look ;
The grosbeak perched anear with roseate plumes,
And sweeter than the Heliconian lyres
Sang by our side the garden's pebbly brook.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

IX

THE country house stood on a chestnut knoll
Above the River in the purple hills ;
Through the wild garden tumbled silver rills,
While many an oak gloomed round with gnarlèd bole.
On the elm's tip fluted the oriole ;
From tangled runnels girt with daffodils
Rare echoes reached us of wood-robin trills,
As on the orchard slopes we took our stroll.
Beneath the trees in sculptured Grecian garb
Sweet Hebe poured the stream of health eterne,
And startled Syrinx listened for the Faun ;
Diana, striding through the dewes of dawn,
Reached to her quiver for the fatal barb,
While gleaming Naiads glimmered from the fern.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

X

BELOVED Fields ! from out your pure domains
Floats music softer than from viol strings ;
Better the warbling of your feathered things
Than all the rolling organ's deep refrains ;
What prima donna trills such liquid strains
As yon brown meadow-lark, that, floating, sings
Above her nest on slow-descending wings,
With plaintive sweetness that the soul enchains ?
Not hers alone, but myriad notes there are
Too sweet for telling, where all sounds are sweet :
The delicate footfalls of the showery rains ;
The breezes rustling o'er the sea-green wheat ;
The murmurous voices, faintly heard and far,
Of children gathering cherries in the lanes.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XI

THE leafy fence-rows made a green retreat,
Where cattle stood within the shade to doze ;
The elder there upreared her bloom of snows,
And many a mavis made the dingle sweet.
Far o'er the corn fields, in the dazzling heat,
The silent women labored in the rows ;
And where the hedge its sheltering shadow throws,
We heard at intervals the lambkins bleat.
We watched the harrows make their furrow wide ;
The thievish grackles follow, round by round,
The running robins halting, as they eyed
With crafty caution all the mellow ground ;
While, three abreast, in seeming conscious pride,
The stately horses passed without a sound.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XII

WE loitered on the headland's rocky knoll
Above the shining River, silver-bright ;
And far below we saw the rapids roll
Their rushing waters into boiling white.
The sun, down-gleaming in his morning might,
Showed the lone fisher with his slender pole —
Where the dazed vision lost at last control —
Push his canoe across the blinding light.
We watched the sea-hawk mounting with his prey,
The brigand eagle meet him in the air,
And, swooping under, catch the falling fish ;
'T was sweet with you to linger idly there,
Or, rising, piloted by your dear wish,
To climb adown the crag-path's perilous way.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XIII

ON further slopes we saw the bright scythes gleam,
But in the meadow where we stood that day
The four-horse wagons took the gathered hay
From fragrant windrows by the willowy stream.
Far off we heard, as in a waking dream,
Faint voices lifted where the labor lay
By distant barns, and now and then the neigh
Of colts at pasture calling to the team.
But when we saw the sudden-coming rain,
We climbed atop the homeward-going load
And marked in evening skies the archèd bow,
As on the hay we laughed and jolting rode
Adown the windings of the orchard lane
Brushed by the cherry branches bending low.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XIV

UPON the porch vine-shadows touched our feet ;
Across the rich fields of the level plain
A breeze, precursor of the summer rain,
Chased the gold billows o'er the sea of wheat.
The dazzling air, a-tremble with the heat,
Grew calm and blue in all the dells again ;
And to the umbrage of the trees the swain
Drove the white flock within the cool retreat.
The fox-grape clambering o'er the oaken limb,
Swayed to and fro in many a green festoon,
And on the rolling lawn in sun-flecked urns
The fitful zephyr swayed each plume of ferns,
While rows of hollyhocks, like maidens slim,
Bowed to each other in the sun of June.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XV

How well we loved, in Summer solitude
To stroll on lonely ridges far away,
Where beeches, with their boles of Quaker gray,
Murmured at times a sylvan interlude !
We heard each songster warble near her brood,
And from the lowland where the mowers lay
Came now and then faint fragrance from the hay,
That touched the heart to reminiscent mood.
We peered down wooded steeps, and saw the sun
Shining in front, tip all the grape-vines wild,
And edge with light the boulders' lichen'd groups ;
While, deep within the gorge, the tinkling run
Coiled through the hollows with its silvered loops
Down to the waiting River, thousand-isled.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XVI

PLEASANT our walks when Summer was the tide :
By many a fertile field our footsteps fell ;
In sunny nooks within the shadowy dell
Where gurgling brooklets o'er the gravel slide
We watched the minnows, silver-shimmering, glide ;
Then farm-ward turning at the noonday bell,
Saw the great horses drinking at the well,
And rosy children clambering for a ride.
We passed along the meadows, redolent
Of heaped-up hay that in the sunshine dries,
I following still the music of your feet
As down the path between the grain we went,
While here and there, with tint of April's eyes,
The cockle blossomed in the golden wheat.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XVII

RICH shone those acres in the glowing heat —
A glittering host with fringed spears of gold
All slowly swaying as the breezes rolled
Above the poppies in the ripened wheat.
Anon we heard the lamb's persistent bleat
From flocks unseen in meadows o'er the wold ;
And through the fence, the colts, grown over-bold,
Pushed their cool noses, glad our hands to greet.
The cows stood in the clover to their knees,
For now the evening milking all was done,
And o'er the vale for many and many a mile
The barns were rosied by the sinking sun ;
Then at the hedge we stopped, and by the stile
Dreamed while the moon rose through the murmuring
trees.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XVIII

THE very weeds were wilted, leaf and blade ;
The Durhams stood and panted in the stream ;
Deep in the pool we saw them slowly wade,
Mottled with gold of many a sunny gleam.
The tired plowman, in the heat extreme,
Stopped by the willows where no leaflet swayed,
And as he brought the water to his team
They stretched their sweating necks and softly neighed.
Beyond the dale, above the sultry steeps,
In fields of bluer and intenser light,
Poised the lone buzzard, rising in repose,
Where soaring upward through the zenith deeps,
In toppling mounds of unimagined white,
The rolling cloud unfolded as a rose !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XIX

OH, the wide River and her water-ways
Whose currents draw us through their rocky gates,
Winding between a thousand grassy aits
To glorious greeneries in unlooked-for bays!
The clustered islands swim in amber haze;
And the rich sun, reluctant, slow awaits
His destined setting, while he still creates
Upon the golden tide one dazzling blaze.
Silence around, save where the waters blue,
Among the sedgy inlets in a dream,
Gurgle unceasingly their liquid note;
Then, leaning listless in our long canoe,
With paddle trailing idly in the stream,
We, mirrored on the rippling surface, float.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XX

WE heard the River singing : "From the lake
Of Canandaigua, making many a twist
To catch the Unadilla, in the mist
Of morn I flow. Chenango then I take,
And through the Pennsylvania border break
To clasp the Juniata's amethyst
Past Tuscarora ; rambling as I list
Beyond Towanda, where a turn I make
To lure the Wyalusing ; then convey
The slow Swatara, Conowingo's creek,
'Salunga, Octorara, and Pequeà :
I drain a thousand streams, yet still I seek
To lose myself within the Chesapeake
In reedy inlets of the Indian bay."

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXI

THE long day over, 'mid the islets fair,
Homeward we headed then our slender boat
Across the crimson waters, slow to float
By many a liliated inlet lying there.
The distant rapids murmured through the air,
And as our oars the placid river smote,
The scarlet circles, widening remote,
Carried away the very wraith of care.
The sunset darkened ; from the hill the moon
Arose full-faced ; and breezes rustling through
The reedy harps waked all their silent strings ;
Then o'er the surface, smooth as some lagoon,
We drifted in the gloaming dim and blue,
As Evening spread abroad her shadowy wings.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXII

THAT shifting island of the Ægean seas,
Home of Apollo and the Ionian Shrine —
The golden Delos of the days divine —
Might wander still among the Cyclades,
But ours was fixed — our paradise whose trees
Bent with the masses of the clambering vine
Sweeter than Leuce by the Euxine brine
Between Danubius and Borysthenes ;
And when upon the ripple-ridgèd sand
We beached our boat near where the rushes sing
A reedy music round the birchen tree,
We, like to happy children, hand in hand
Strolled through the shadows to the island spring,
Cold as Telphusa's fount of Arcady.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXIII

'T WAS our delight when Autumn days were here,
To stand in tawny ferns and see the sun
Break through the drifting clouds of dove-like dun
And, for a moment shining summer-clear,
Turn to resplendent gold the hickory sere.
Then where the quinquefolia had o'errun
The oak's extremest branches, and begun
To fall in pendants, crimson tier on tier,
We watched the brilliant streamers as they swayed
Touched with the glorious light, and all aglow,
Like scarlet gonfalons in some cavalcade
Of mediæval tourney long ago,
Where bugles blared, and plumèd palfreys neighed,
And lances fell on armor, blow on blow !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXIV

WITHIN the woods September sunlight lay
Dappling the golden soil ; there was no sound
Save of the acorn dropping to the ground,
Or, now and then, the bugle of the jay.
At times a squirrel from the bending spray
Leapt to the chestnut limb with venturous bound ;
Or on some wooded crest, the lonely hound
Woke the reverberations far away.
The corn was ranked in many a tasseled tent,
And bluest haze slept on the peaceful hills
Where once the Sagamores had fought and slain.
Anear, the plodding farmer slowly bent
Across the umber stretches, while the drills
Scattered the blessings of the future grain.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXV

AGAIN the cider-press, age-worn and browned,
I see along the lane-side by the trees ;
The waiting load of pippins yet to squeeze
Near piles of pomace lying on the ground ;
The horse that dragged the creaking lever round ;
The oozing juice ; and hear, above all these,
The chorus of the honey-hunting bees, —
That sweet monotony of drowsy sound !
Against the bellefleur boughs the ladder lay,
And you were standing on the lower rung,
When, in the shade, a row of casks we saw ;
Then drawing forth the barrel's foamy bung —
Laughing together on that happy day —
We drew the nectar through an oaten straw.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXVI

OH, who, with even long-accustomed eyes,
From these steep headlands where the River roars,
Can view the region with its fertile shores,
Nor feel that rarest beauty round him lies !
Through all the vale Demeter's temples rise —
The snow-white barns that hold her golden stores,
Where flails make murmur on the threshing floors
Like distant thunder in the Summer skies.
Here Plenty from her overflowing horn
Pours endless blessing ; ruddy-breasted Toil
Reaps the wide valley of its rich increase, —
The rolling slopes of pasture and of corn ;
Here new-sown grain springs from the teeming soil,
And on the fair hills broods the Dove of Peace.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXVII

GREAT fleets of riven clouds intensely white,
Sailing wind-harried, 'thwart the lowering sky ;
On the wild River, where the islands lie,
Long levels of insufferable light ;
Cloud-shadows, moving in portentous flight,
Dimming the crimson of the steeps near by,
And glooming golden ridges, crested high,
As the dread pinions of Apollyon might :
Weird slopes of tawny grasses all astir
As if some monster crept along the hill
Covered with hide of panther-colored fur ;
While in the blustering air, grown bleak and chill —
The only wraith of Summer lingering still —
Floats the blown milkweed's ermined gossamer.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXVIII

THERE is a legend the Algonquins tell
Of power and splendor of the Great White One;
The God of Light he is, and of the Sun,
And in their strange lore hath no parallel.
He, in the Summer, from his citadel,
Comes to the gates of his dominion,
And throws them open when the day's begun,
And shuts them in the evening. But a spell
Saps his puissance when the Autumn haze
Spreads its dim-shimmering silver on the rills;
Then to the mountain-tops he slowly wends
And, idly drowsing on the dreamy hills,
Puffs at his pipe, and as the smoke descends,
Behold our mellow Indian Summer days!

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXIX

THE nearest woodlands wore a misty veil ;
From phantom trees we saw the last leaf float ;
The hills though near us seemed to lie remote,
Wrapped in a balmy vapor, golden-pale.
From somewhere hidden in the dreamy dale —
Latona's sorrow yet within her note —
Reft of her comrades, o'er the stubbled oat
We heard the calling of the lonely quail.
In the bare corn field stalked the silent crow ;
Too faint the breeze to make the grasses sigh,
And not one carol came from out the sky ;
But o'er the golden gravelly levels low,
The brook, loquacious, still went liltng by
As liquidly as Lara, long ago.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXX

FROM the old mill-wheel came no splash nor foam,
For in the race the Autumnal stream was low ;
The restless pigeons, flying to and fro,
Circled above, but soon came sailing home ;
The sparrows, settling on the stack's gold dome,
Garrulous chattered of the coming snow ;
For when the storms of Winter rudely blow
They can no longer from the gables roam.
Within the barn the booming of the flail
And rattling crackle of the beaten straw
Made pleasant music to the listening ear ;
Across the unrippled surface of the mere
We heard the piping of the scattered quail,
And from the wood, a crow's foreboding caw.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXI

AND though November on the fading hill
Trode, in her sombre robes, with muffled feet,
Yet to our ears came music, silver-sweet,
From tinkling lyres in the hidden rill.
As days were coming with their bitter chill,
We dearer prized the pale sun's feeble heat ;
As flowers were gone, we gladlier felt to greet
The green which edged the mossed wheel by the mill.
The buttonwoods that by the old race grew,
Were lifting silently their marble arms
In the deep arches of immurmurous noon.
Our only birds were pigeons from the farms ;
While in the rain-filled ruts the pools of blue
Held the frayed circle of the gray-faced moon.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXII

Low tangles of long grasses, sere and pale ;
The flowerless stalks of most pathetic weeds
Holding their heads up with a few scant seeds —
Their hope of next year's life ; the souging wail
Of scentless winds that scour the bitter vale
And find no fragrance now from all the meads ; —
The sorrow of the time that far exceeds
The deepest pathos of the saddest tale !
We met these sombre changes with a sigh,
Feeling the breath of Winter drawing near,
And wished at heart the days of Spring were here,
For now we saw but boundless blanks of gray
Where once appeared the glowing sapphire sky
With her unfathomable deeps of May.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXIII

THE wind was rising to a wintry gale ;
We left the valley, lying white below,
And from the untrod ridges deep with snow
Turned and looked down upon the pallid vale.
The spirits of the North began to wail
Around the cliff, as toiling upward slow,
We reached the crest and saw the sunset-glow
Flare on the crags around us, crimson-pale.
Then all the twilight phantoms of the sky
Changed into ever-shifting dragon-form,
And close above the mountain, crouching, lay ;
Weird voices in the pines began to cry
From out the tortured tops of gloomy gray,
As through the gathering darkness rose the storm.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXIV

THE snow was thawing in the country lane,
And from the wooded gullies flowing down
The tiny streams ran tinkling to the town,
Filling the brooklet as in time of rain.
Far off we saw the heavy-loaded wain,
That, creaking, crept along the lone hill's crown ;
In rocky knolls, crested with thickets brown,
We listened for a bird — but all in vain.
Yet Pan still plays upon a thousand lyres
If we but hear, so long as in our souls
The light-winged goddess, Fancy, still survives ;
And leaning by the telegraph's tall poles, —
The Wind's sweet finger strumming on the wires, —
We heard the bees hum in Hymettus hives !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXV

WE wandered by the River foot-hills sere
When frost had turned the grass to faded gray ;
Feeling the influence of the gloomy day
We walked in silence through the stretches drear.
There was no hint of Spring-time far or near ;
The drifts of snow that in the woodland lay
Seemed Summer's gravestones, as we took our way
Like mourners at the funeral of the year.
Then suddenly some bird began to pour
His buoyant spirit on the silent air,
When, at that sound, the sorrow of the time
Took flight with all the legions of despair,
While in our hearts began the Spring to chime,
And we were glad, for Winter seemed no more.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXVI

THE damp south-wind came slowly from the bay,
And with the drizzle brought the sea-birds, too, —
Lone gulls far flying from their ocean blue,
And seeming lost in these confines of gray.
The River hills, so purple yesterday,
Now wrapped in mist, were blotted from our view ;
The smoke hung flattened o'er the factory flue,
And veiled the steeples in a murky spray.
Turning we sought afar the ivied gate
That led us to the house whose ancient eaves
Hummed with the sparrow in the leafless vines ;
Indoors we sat and turned the poets' leaves,
For if outside the Spring was drear and late,
Eternal Summer lived within their lines.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXVII

VANISHED, alas ! all heralds of the Spring !
The rath song-sparrow, yesternoon that shook
The elder with his lay, these dells forsook,
Leaving no echo of his voice or wing,
And now in warmer glens is carolling.
Above the muffled bubble of the brook
We hear a bird-like sound, but when we look,
'T is but the withered beech-leaves' twittering.
Silence is in the dale — a waiting hush —
As if the very hill-side listens too
That it may hear the birds their song renew ;
While in the thicket's briery underbrush,
Where last year sang the unrivalled hermit-thrush,
The Raspberry bends her bows of bloomy blue.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXVIII

BLUSTERING the day, but as the rain was done,
We sought the slopes whereon the kalmia grew ;
Far on the River — loved of me and you —
The white caps glistened in the streaks of sun.
There was a roaring in the clouds of dun
That, torn in shreds, across the heavens blew,
As o'er the wooded ridges wildly flew
The eagle-flighted North-Wind, Aquilon.
But down below, within the level vale,
Where the high fell the lower valley shields,
The plowman went his still recurrent round ;
Careless of winds he plodded in the dale ;
His shining share up-turned the stubbled ground
Against the seeding-time of oaten fields.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XXXIX

IN the wild sky the lakes of shifting blue
Were, by wind-harried clouds, revealed or blurred ;
Along the brook, from leafy mould interred,
We saw the snowdrop shyly peeping through.
The flock of grackles, decked in raven hue,
Turned down the rudders of their tails, and whirred
Up to the walnut as a single bird,
Rasping their wheezy squeak as slow they flew.
The shadow from the gnomon of the pine
Fell on the dial of the lawn, and told
In intervals of sun, the passing hours ;
But sap was waking in the eglantine,
Beneath the ground the jonquil forged her gold,
And hope was springing in the hearts of flowers.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XL

BEFORE the birds returned 't was passing sweet
Down in the leafless woods to take our strolls ;
The silvery glimmer of the beechen boles
Drew us still on to where the brooklets meet.
The crocus, bursting from her long retreat,
Showed the rare color that her cup unrolls ;
And banks of violets, smothering all the knolls,
Brought the blue hills and laid them at our feet.
From Nature's hand the lyre is never gone ;
Her tuneful fingers, moving to and fro,
Make music on the wind-harp of the pines ;
And over golden pebbles, rippling on
Amid the greenbrier and the laurel low,
Her streams purl sweeter than a Poet's lines !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XLI

'T WAS late in March, and all the air was chill ;
The turbid River, swollen to the brim,
Rushed past the bending alders, sullen, grim,
While sombre o'er us rose the rock-ribbed hill.
But down the gorge the silver-running rill
Gurgled as if 't were June, and from the slim
Dove-colored perches of the beechen limb,
Sudden we heard the bluebird's welcome trill ;
Ah, then we hoped that Spring at last was near,
And so took heart, for on those wings the hue
Of heavenly April came, and well we knew
That soon the water-lily roots would hear,
And stir their fibres in the waters blue
Among the purple islands, dim and dear.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XLII

As chilling airs grew balmy once again,
Within the forest from a leafless spray
Some timorous songster tried his earliest lay,
For Spring was coyly coming up the glen.
The cardinal flashed by within our ken —
A wingèd rose where all the groves were gray;
And like a flash of April came the jay,
While captious in the tangle chafed the wren.
But the brown-sparrow on the alder-tree,
Outrивalling better warblers of the wood,
Forced our applause by bursts of ecstasy;
As at Olympia once, dwarf Zenocles,
Amid the plaudits of the multitude,
Won the wreathed olive from Euripides.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XLIII

WE saw the clouds above the hill-top scud,
Blown by the winds of March in scattering flocks ;
While o'er the recently submergèd rocks
The yellow River rolled his swollen flood.
Within the roads the ruts were filled with mud ;
Upon the wet lawn sprouted four-o'clocks ;
And, following on this vernal equinox,
All sulphur-colored burst the spice-wood bud.
And then it was, with joyance in our eyes,
We marked the iris push her spears of green
Along the edges of the garden rill ;
And then it was, that with a glad surprise,
Seeing her glory — for a year unseen —
We ran to greet the earliest daffodil.

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XLIV

THROUGH upland trees we heard the loud winds blow,
For all the chestnut limbs were brown and bare,
But on the southern slopes we lingered, where
The blossoms of the cherry fell like snow.
Across the vale, majestically slow,
Floated the shadow of a cloud, and there
The cottage smoke curled in the azure air,
And winding streams flashed forth a silver glow.
Around us, ridges rose of rock and fern ;
But in the fields afar slow moved the teams,
And as the plowmen paused to make the turn —
The centre lessening at each furrow run —
Athwart the valley danced the dazzling gleams
From burnished shares refulgent in the sun !

THE FIELDS OF DAWN

XLV

WHEN o'er the mead the jonquil-trumpet blows,
Spring sounds once more her soft exultant strain ;
Between the golden showers of the rain
I hear her laughter where the brooklet flows.
Beside her path the earliest crocus grows,
And daffodils go dancing in her train ;
Along green slopes within the country lane
She bends to greet the budding of the rose.
Ah yes, long-wished-for May at last I see,
With all her blossoms and with all her blue,
And gladly from December do I part ;
And yet, Dear Love, it is not May with me, —
For till the violet brings a sight of you
Still is it Winter in my lonely heart !

LATER SONNETS

*Let us sing somewhat higher strains.
Vineyards and tamarisks delight not all.*
— VIRGIL.

LATER SONNETS

THE SINGER

I LISTENED once, upon an Autumn day,
Unto a warbler in a golden wood ;
Entrancèd by the music as I stood,
Unequalled seemed to me his wondrous lay.
Then as I thought of all the choir of May, —
Ecstatic notes in every solitude, —
So changed by that remembrance was my mood,
That, disenthralled, I sadly turned away :

O Poet, chanting in these waning times,
Far from the fair Elizabethan Spring, —
Outpouring here reiterated rhymes, —
How full of pathos is thy sadder fate
Who by the spirit art impelled to sing,
Yet conscious that thy voice is heard too late !

LATER SONNETS

TO AN OLD ANCHOR LYING FAR INLAND AT MATAMORAS

PERCHANCE some Spanish galleon after gold
Dragged thy rude bulk along the coral reef ;
Perhaps some blustering, buccaneering thief,
His mutinous crew held down within the hold,
Dropped thee in cypress inlets, while he rolled
His booty shoreward ere it came to grief, —
Such swaggering, slashing Andalusian chief
As Pedro Alvarado, famed of old.
A faithful friend thou wast, now cast away,
Bent with the strain of dire adversity,
Man's great ingratitude thy only wage ;
Like some dim Ammiral of a by-gone day,
Unthanked, abandoned in thy useless age,
Untombed afar from the familiar sea !

LATER SONNETS

INADEQUACY

OH, the sweet sounds anear each starry gate
Of cloudy temples in the ether hung !
Oh, phantom voices from the spirit wrung
When lifted on her airy wings elate !
Ah, for the power such tones to re-create !
I heard the Seraph, but my halting tongue
Pronounced but infelicities ; I sung
Mere stammerings, vague and inarticulate.
So one adown weird pathways of the night
Hears in his sleep, by pale ethereal streams,
Music elusively beyond his reach,
And waking, ever fails to trace aright
Strains he hath heard, — they lying beyond speech
In depths of incommunicable dreams.

LATER SONNETS

THE ANNUNCIATION

A PAINTING BY PIERRE MIGNARD
IN POSSESSION OF THE AUTHOR

THE radiant angel stands within her room.
She kneels and listens ; on her heaving breast,
To still its flutterings, are her sweet hands pressed,
The while his lips foretell her joyful doom.
Tears — happy tears — are rising, and a bloom
Of maiden blushes clothes her that attest
The Rose she is. The haloed, heavenly guest
Lingers upon his cloud of golden gloom.
He gives to her the lily which he brings.
Each cherub in the aureole above —
Where harps unseen are pealing peace and love —
Smiles with delight, and very softly sings ;
While over Mary's head, on whitest wings,
Hovers the presence of the Holy Dove.

LATER SONNETS

LONGINGS

As some lone Alien, who within his bed
After long nights of restlessness hath lain
Tossed with his fever, looking through the pane,
Sighs for the coming of the morning red
To ease the throbbings of his heart and head,
And hopes, as night hath failed, that day again
May bring repose unto his tired brain,
And that, at length, he may be comforted :
So we, worn fitful, weak, and ill at ease,
Sick of this strange existence which is rife
With sorrows feverous that never cease ;
Far from our home, and tired with the strife,
Press our flushed faces 'gainst the glass of Life
And dream the Dawn, at last, will bring us peace.

LATER SONNETS

TO AN AGED POET

WHAT if the boat be drifting down the stream,
And oars, well-worn, hang idly by its side ?
Must man forever pull against the tide
Nor bask a little in the sunset beam ?
O Worker in the glorious realm of Dream,
Rest thou awhile, and let the River guide ;
Far — far beyond thee, as the waters glide,
Behold the Beauteous City, golden, gleam !
Vex not thy soul, nor fear the coming night ;
When evening goes, shall burst the morning light
O'er all the ocean of eternity :
Be sure, O Friend, there is a Destiny
That holds the rudder, and that steers aright, —
Then let the current sweep us to the sea !

LATER SONNETS

THE ONSET

TO EDWARD ROBESON TAYLOR

At the dread waving of Apollyon's rod,
Astride their frenzied chargers snorting flame,
On sulphurous clouds the wingèd Legions came,
With hate enpanoplied, and vengeance shod.
Up from the Nadir, myriads of them trod
The shining steeps to Heaven with wild acclaim;
Furious they rushed, vindictive, — and their aim,
To storm the inviolable gates of God!
As swarms of sea-birds, by the sunset dazed,
Blot out the sky near Kolanara's coast,
So, countless, flew they where the splendor flared;
While, eager on the peaks, with wings upraised —
Dark 'gainst the fulgence of the surging host —
The Heralds, from their lifted trumpets, blared!

LATER SONNETS

BEREFT

My life was in its Autumn, as I lay
Dreaming upon an upland o'er the sea.
Lonely I was as Lydian Niobe
When all her pearls Apollo took away.
Then came a beauteous woman fair as day,
Who gave herself and all her love to me ;
Anon sweet children clambered round my knee
Eager for kisses, — and the time seemed May.
These children's children came, and I was grown
Aged and worn, but still on them I smiled
For love of them and of the mother mild.
Sudden I woke — childless, forlorn, alone. . . .
O Poësy ! canst thou for this atone ? —
Thou who hast reft me thus of wife and child ?

LATER SONNETS

IN MEMORIAM

Not like this stranded hulk along the bay
That rots by inches as the breakers pour
Their ebb and flow athwart its sunken floor, —
Not in such slow and ignominious way
Didst thou, O Soul, approach thy final day ;
But struggling with the surges evermore,
Amid the havoc and the deafening roar,
Thou in our sight didst still defy decay.
Thou, on the foaming billows to thy grave,
Blown by the storms of thine imperious will,
Wrecked by the blasts of Thought, didst fearless ride,
And, from the crest of Life's ensanguined wave,
Though rudely buffeted, yet battling still,
Didst sink to darkness in unconquered pride.

LATER SONNETS

THE CATARACT

SUPREME, from out the hollow of Thy hand
These torrents pour. These glories and these glooms,
These splendors wove on Thine eternal looms,
Are fragments of Thy power — Thy command
Made visible. Thou didst but move Thy wand
Above the void and darkness, and the wombs
Of Chaos birthed this wonder that now fumes
In columned spray unutterably grand.
As in the abyss the mighty waters pour,
The rocky canyon to its summit shakes,
And all the valley trembles under us ;
High o'er the mist the screaming eagles soar,
As in the chasm the boiling torrent wakes
Her everlasting anthem thunderous.

LATER SONNETS

LONGFELLOW

MELODIOUS Poet, on auspicious days
When o'er thy chaste and polished pages bending,
I read each sweet line to its golden ending,
Bound am I by the fetters of thy lays.
And as I follow every happy phrase —
Music and beauty to thy matter lending —
I seem to listen to soft waters wending
Their liquid journey over pebbly ways.
Full oft thy verse sounds like a river flowing
Through windy reed-lands to the distant lea ;
Anon thy voice, above the storm-cloud going,
Peals as the sounding trumpets of the sea ;
Or, like some mediæval clarion blowing
From bannered turrets, rings out silverly.

LATER SONNETS

THE MONARCH

Down in the cloudy towers of my sleep
A dungeon loomed wherein I heard the groans
Of those long ages prisoned — moans on moans ;
And peering further in the noisome deep,
In which no rays of daylight e'er could creep,
I saw a skeleton of whitened bones —
A mighty king's — the conqueror of thrones —
Chained to the walls within that donjon-keep.
His crown still blazed upon him, golden-dull,
Whence, through the dark, glared jewels, tiger-eyed ;
In awe I stood, and trembling, held my breath ;
And then a Voice — not his who there had died —
Hissed from the hollow of that whitened skull :
“I am the King of Kings, — undying Death !”

LATER SONNETS

"BLAME NOT THE POET"

BLAME not the Poet, ye who idly read,
If on the strings he strike with fingers rude,
Or if at times his tones are harsh and crude ;
Nature, we know, as oft hath grown a weed
As borne a flower ; foolish were he, indeed,
Who loved her less for that. Our very blood
Bounds not with equal pace, but every mood
Hath its own pulse. Let Nature for him plead, —
For she herself is rarely at her best ;
Her harp is oft unstrung — not always tense ;
No flat monotony of excellence
Is hers ; that glorious pageant of the West
Is but her gala-day magnificence, —
There, as she looks one moment, sumptuous dressed.

LATER SONNETS

THE FAN

A. B. E.

DEAR Lady, never was a gift more meet
Than yours this sultry day — a palm-leaf fan.
The traveller journeying on from Karaman
To Cairo, southward, scarcely feels more heat
Than we at home, — there the dark-sandalled feet
And the swart turbaned faces African
Scorch on the camels in the caravan,
While here, to-day, men drop upon the street.

In curtained coolness of this quiet room,
With half-closed eyes, I lean back in my chair,
And, slowly fanning, tread a land of dreams.
I seem to scent the Arabian roses' bloom ;
Soft gales of Ceylon reach me from her streams,
And Persian zephyrs stir the silent air.

LATER SONNETS

BELLONA

TO HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

ROUND her the deafening cannon crashed and roared
 'Mid sulphurous smoke that blotted out the sky ;
Upon the maimed she turned her gloating eye
 And revelled where the red-beaked vultures gored.
Anear was seen the onset of a horde
 Wading in slaughter 'mid heart-rending moans ;
Gladly she heard from dying lips their groans
 And clenched, in reeking hands, her dripping sword.
Scarlet her sandals, saturate with the blood
 That flowed from countless vassals and from kings ;
Round her whirled dust of empires and of thrones ;
While from her pyramid of human bones, —
 “ Havoc ! ” she screamed, and in the blackness stood
 Waving the crimson of her awful wings !

LATER SONNETS

THE TRAVELLERS

TO A CLASS OF GIRL-STUDENTS

How oft, at morn, from some lone Alpine door,
I watched the traveller toiling up the height,
His feet among the roses, but his sight
Fixed on the summits where the eagles soar.
Steep was his path ; thunderous the torrent's roar ;
Upward he went with toil, yet with delight,
Until I lost him on the peaks of white,
And never in the lowlands saw him more.
And from these dewy valleys, even so,
Long have we seen you scaling cliff and scar
Upon the Alps of Learning ; roses now
Bloom round you, — yet, mount higher — higher far,
Fair travellers ! pass the peaks, and onward go
Where knowledge, lustrous, leads you like a star.

LATER SONNETS

THE VOYAGERS

A REMINISCENCE OF THE ODYSSEY

THEY leave the Cyclops roaring in his cave,
Bereft of sight ; then to the marge they creep
And set their sails, and all the triremes sweep
Suddenly seaward on the luminous wave.
About the prows the lithesome mermaids lave
Star-crownèd foreheads, while the slumbering deep
Heaves with the rocks hurled downward from the steep,
And at the galley bends the shackled slave.
The Auroran twilight, soft and silvery fair,
Spreads o'er the moving waters silently,
Where dolphins sport upon the rolling swell ;
While, rising fulgent from the glimmering sea,
The Horses of the Morning paw the air,
And, far away, a Triton winds his shell.

LATER SONNETS

TO RICHARD HENRY STODDARD
POET AND CRITIC

ON THE 74TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

O POET! while the Years in veiled array —
As stately past the stern procession goes —
Drop on thy head, at seventy-four, the snows,
Where once they placed the blossoms in thy May, —
Let me — unheeded Singer of to-day —
Offer my tribute, with this mountain rose,
To one who is preëminent of those
That keep the Muse's temple from decay.
For Song's unpurchasable Knight thou art,
Who, with thy pen as with a sword of fire,
Guardest the sacred gates of Poësy;
Therefore, O Master of the tuneful lyre,
Accept the homage which I bring to thee
With hope of long life from my heart of heart!

LATER SONNETS

THE BATTLE-FIELD

GETTYSBURG

THOSE were the conquered, still too proud to yield —
These were the victors, yet too poor for shrouds !
Here scarlet Slaughter slew her countless crowds
Heaped high in ranks where'er the hot guns pealed.
The brooks that wandered through the battle-field
Flowed slowly on in ever-reddening streams ;
Here where the rank wheat waves and golden gleams,
The dreadful squadrons thundering, charged and reeled.
Within the blossoming clover many a bone
Lying unsepulchred, has bleached to white ;
While gentlest hearts that only love had known,
Have ached with anguish at the awful sight ;
And War's gaunt Vultures that were lean, have grown
Gorged in the darkness in a single night !

LATER SONNETS

AN EAST RAIN ON THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS

HERE let me walk upon this headland high
Which jutting heavenward overlooks the main,
And feel upon my face the pelting rain
From soft savannas 'neath an Orient sky.
What cloudless dome can with this vapor vie?
For summer sunshine now I feel disdain;
The driven mist, as thine, is my domain,
O dove-gray sea-bird drifting dimly by!
Ah, shut me round and hide the half-seen ships;
Come, soft-blown rain, from tropic fields of rice, —
From plummy capes of far Arabian seas;
Bring wafts of Malabar unto my lips;
Beat on my brow with drops that touched the teas
By palmy Ceylon and the isles of spice!

LATER SONNETS

THE BLACK PORTALS

SPIRIT of mine that soon must venturous spread
Through voids unknown thy feeble, fluttering plumes,
Hast thou no fear to wing those endless glooms?
No apprehension nor misgivings dread?
Those realms unfathomed of the speechless dead,
Which never gleam of eldest star illumines —
Lethean canyons that the Soul entombs —
Art thou not awed such sombre vasts to tread?
My Soul replied: "Wisdom hath made all things —
Life and the end of life, He gives to thee.
Down Death's worn path the mightiest still have trod.
Where laurelled poets and anointed Kings
Have gone for ages, it is good to be —
Rest thou contented with the will of God."

LATER SONNETS

A COLORED SERVANT UNABLE TO READ

WITH what a wonder born of mystery
She lifts the books, and reverently grave,
Moves 'mid these voiceless oracles ; — how brave
She bears that doom which naught can mollify.
With longing eyes, perhaps with yearnings high,
She turns the fervid pages Shakespeare gave
To all, it seems, but her, who was a slave,
And never sees a book without a sigh.

Justice is God's ! . . . Let not her heart rebel ;
For Knowledge, like that flower which blooms at night,
May burst at last full-blossomed on her sight ;
And they, who here, forsooth, seem learned and wise,
May wait without the walls of Paradise,
The while she enters in — through serving well.

LATER SONNETS

IN BONDAGE

Man is a Dream of Shadows. — PINDAR

IF speechless through this shadowy vale we stray,
Reft of the afflatus of the sacred Nine ;
If mute, in joy or suffering we resign
The dirge to others, and the roundelay, —
It will not, Friend, be ordered so alway,
For lips can be unlocked by touch divine :
E'en Memnon's image by the palm and pine
Sang in the desert at the dawn of day.
I feel the Spirit call me from afar ;
And if in silence now these steps I wend,
This forced aphonia may not last for long ;
Not here, indeed, but in some fairer star,
Fed from immortal rills, I hope to end
A life ineloquent, with affluent Song.

LATER SONNETS

TO A YOUNG MAID

THOU bidd'st me speak of Love, and thou a girl,
A dove-like maiden, innocently sweet,
Whose gentle, duteous, and well-mothered feet
Know not the primrose path, nor the red whirl
Of passion's vortex. Thou art still a pearl
Ungathered and unworn. It were not meet
That I should call the dark winds of deceit
To waft my ship of words, so speech must furl
Her sail, and anchor here. Some tongue, not mine,
Shall tell thee later, sweet one ! what love is ;
Some lips, alas, not these, teach thee the bliss.
Long may that vestal nimbus, which is thine,
Circle thee round — unsullied by Love's kiss —
And angel Innocence, more than half divine !

LATER SONNETS

THE BARD

FROM immemorial times men have agreed
Their greatest are the Poet, Architect,
Painter, Musician, — those who do elect
To build the Beautiful ; to ever feed
The cravings of the soul with starry deed ;
Those who their solitary thought project
Into the ideal world, and there erect
The cloudy fanes of an ethereal creed.
Yet not to all, however great and strong —
Though each a master of his subtile art —
Not equally to these the bays belong ;
But, in the vast Valhalla of man's heart,
Niched above all, and eminent apart,
The Poet stands, — soul of immortal Song !

LATER SONNETS

TO A GENERAL OF THE REVOLUTION

1776

INTREPID Orator and Statesman bold,
At whose impetuous and impassioned words
Men dropped the plowshares and took up their swords
To fight for Freedom, in the days of old, —
Forgotten art thou in this lust for gold,
Although thy strong and stirring life records
Deeds that were noble. But this age rewards
With calm neglect thy labors manifold.
Champion of Liberty, and of the Right ;
Brother in perilous arms to Washington ;
Thou zealous Ruler of a glorious State, —
Is there no way thy service to requite ? . . .
Sleep, Patriot, Sleep ! nor ever know the great
Ingratitude of Freedom for her son !

LATER SONNETS

THE HOME-LAND

WHY should I seek for beauty or for ease,
On alien shores afar removed from mine ?
What is Illyria, with her oil and wine, —
Far Andalusia and the Pyrenees,
Or Vallombrosa, when compared to these
Our native beauties ? Not the castled Rhine
Is fair as Susquehanna, yet we pine
For restless travel o'er the illusive seas.
Ah, rather pluck the rich Floridian rose
By Tampa, or by Pensacola's bay,
And wander where the wild magnolia blows ;
Or by the balmy sea-coast lingering, stray
Where Coronado offers soft repose
And cliffs of Candelaria greet the day.

LATER SONNETS

A LANDSCAPE BY REMBRANDT

A DRIFT of storm obscures the upper air,
And lower, glows a waste of dubious light ;
It seems as if the legions of the night
Were slowly loosened from some cloudy lair.
Dim figures climb the winding cliff-path stair
And lose themselves in shadows which affright ;
The gloom is ominous, and the inner sight
Sees half revealèd spectres flitting there.
The sombre river lies as if asleep,
Save where the boatman with his vaporous oar
Troubles the waters. By the dusky shore
Two timid children stand alone and still ;
While on the weird crest of the windy steep
Arise the white arms of the ghostly mill.

LATER SONNETS

FETTERED

'T is true I am not now what I would be
If health had helped me on ; for I have been
As one who ever battles unforeseen,
Some conquering wave within a ruthless sea.
Had I but, lifelong, been from illness free
As many a one, then in the hyaline
Of song, sailing beyond the ports terrene,
I might have reached my haven. But for me
Sickness hath bound my wings as with a thong —
Hath dimmed my rising star to dark eclipse.
As some pale diver the sea-weed among
Lets drop his pearls that he may reach the ships,
So I, at last, must close impassioned lips,
Relinquishing full many a pearl of song.

LATER SONNETS

THE BEAST

DEEP in the earth's most fathomless profound,
In darksome caverns where there comes no light,
I heard a monster crawling through the night,
And as it came its roaring shook the ground.
A Shape invisible, it glared around ;
Only its eyes I saw — a baleful sight —
Green-blazing balls of terror and of might ; —
Formless the horror came — a moving sound.
Then, when I thought the Beast would strike me dead,
Prone in the dark I fell, and, trembling, prayed ;
Whereat, descending from the walls above —
While splendor filled the cave from overhead —
In dazzling beauty to my eyes displayed,
Appeared the white wings of the sacred Dove.

LATER SONNETS

A VOICE FROM THE BORDER-LAND

A MAIDEN SPEAKS

OH, take me not where northern tempests blow
Amid the mountains of my native shore,
Where the great rivers with their thunderous roar
Dark through the pallid valleys plunging go ;
But on this golden coast, where breezes low
Float from pacific seas unknown before,
Here let me breathe until my day is o'er,
Far from the land of lone Laurentian snow.
Alas, if I so young must meet my doom,
Let it be here by Esperanza's lake
Where Bernardino's ranges rise, and take
The splendors of the morning, or where bloom
Of Pasadena's roses still may make
Remembered fragrance round my dying room.

LATER SONNETS

THE COMMONPLACE

ALONG the marsh a group of silent reeds ;
The rain-filled ruts reflecting heaven's deep hue
In muddy roads, and as the dome as blue ;
Some chattering snow-birds clustering on the seeds
Of winter's withered flowers, miscallèd weeds ;
Pale wraiths of steam from some far factory flue
Seen at the dawn, the red sun shining through ;
And dun clouds rolling from the iron steeds.
The saw-mill that within the woodland sings ;
Wistaria, purpling some old whitewashed wall ;
A glass of water from up-bubbling springs ;
This simple sonnet with its lowly wings
Skimming the surface of the commonest things, —
E'en these have pleased me when high themes would
pall.

LATER SONNETS

THE QUEEN OF THE TIDES

SHE moves through heaven as the home of light,
Seeming a world beyond our own more blessed ;
And when her silvery shallop seeks the West,
Fain would we follow to her regions bright.
But she hath yawns of Darkness, black as night ;
Riverless canyons ; sulphurous gulphs unguessed ;
And o'er her monstrous crater's lava crest
Never a cloud hath poised its fleecy white.
No flower is there ; no grave, — no gracious sod ;
No blessèd rain within those vales of stone ;
She seems some incompleated thought of God ;
And on that pallid orb as on a throne —
Where no created thing perchance hath trod —
Eternal Silence sits and broods alone.

LATER SONNETS

TO AN OLD LABORER

ON looking from the window to the street
Each eve is seen an old man trudging by,
Infirm and poor, with body bent awry,
And head bowed forward toward his tired feet.
Black with the dust, and sweltering with the heat —
Shovelling the coals each day incessantly —
He never looks from pavement to the sky,
Nor any of the passers does he greet.
Thus every eve through sunshine or through sleet,
He may be seen, as slow he shuffles nigh.
Brave heart ! let me salute you, as is meet ;
We both are of the toilers, — you and I, —
You've fought for seventy years against defeat,
Now victory 's near — for some day you will die !

LATER SONNETS

ON A PAINTING

You mark at eve, far outward to the sea,
Enormous cliffs that rise and grandly loom, —
Monsters portentous of some direful doom,
Guarding the gateways to immensity.
Low down the scarlet clouds are drifting free
Where dying roses of the sunset bloom ;
And voices, as of phantoms from the gloom,
Reverberate the things that are to be.
Darkness is coming from the caves of sleep
To soothe the restless breezes, and to lull
The crimson billows that unceasing roll ;
And silence broods upon the purpling deep
Where, like a disembodied, wandering soul,
Wavers the pinion of the lonely gull.

LATER SONNETS

HE BUILDS THE CITY OF ENOCH

YEARLY I till the vale and sow the seed,
But in the furrow rots the golden grain ;
My labor is accursed, and all in vain, —
The very earth revolting at my deed.
God saith no man shall slay me, though I plead
Daily for death. He placed this scarlet stain
Upon my brow, and agonizing pain
Gnaws me beneath it — yet He gives no heed.
Enoch reproacheth me — the guileless lad —
With eyes too like that other — long since dead.
Remorse engulfs me in her sanguine flood ;
I build this City, else I should go mad ;
But, as I work, the frowning walls turn red,
And all the towers drip crimson with *his* blood.

LATER SONNETS

THE SPIRIT OF POESY

Not the close friendship of the closest friends ;
Not wealth descending on her golden wings ;
Titles nor honor, — no ephemeral things, —
Can, for the lack of her, e'er make amends.
She will not stoop to sublunary ends,
Nor touch the baubles which the base world brings ;
Her song unpurchasable, still she sings,
And all her soul upon the singing spends.
She treads her constellated paths alone,
Sandalled with starry aspirations bright,
Beyond the visions of this world — how far !
Sadly she sits upon her dazzling throne
In fading splendor, like a lingering star
That pales at sunrise in the wastes of light !

LATER SONNETS

THE FIELDS OF QUIET

“SPIRIT, whose wings, unruffled, ever seem
Folded in calm across thy peaceful breast,
Who waitest near the Throne within the West, —
Where are the Quiet Fields of which we dream?
Lie they along that molten-golden stream,
That flows at eve above yon mountain’s crest?
Are they the vales reclusive, named of Rest,
That through the opal gateways faintly gleam?”
And then a voice in faint seraphic strain
Came drifting downward on the twilight breath,
From realms unseen beyond the vesper sky:
“The Fields of Quiet, here ye seek in vain;
Within the Dark those ashen regions lie,
Deep in the kingdoms of the Monarch, Death!”

LATER SONNETS

NICARAGUA

1900

I, LAKE of Nicaragua, lifted here
High on the mountains from my sister seas,
Have yet a yearning to be joined to these,
And feel at last my reunion near.
Far off arise and echo, silver clear,
Clarions of Hope ; and on the island-leas
Hymns of return hum through my tropic trees, —
O day so long desired, soon appear !
Then many a ship that floats the stripes and stars
May cross my waters as with angel wings
Grain-laden for the famine-stricken East ;
But battle-squadrons, bent on bloody wars,
Shall come, alas, the while that senseless Beast
Ramps in the hearts of Peoples and of Kings.

LATER SONNETS

THE DYING DAY

WHAT is thy trouble, Day, in that thine eyes
Are weighted with the beauty of despair? —
That all the illusive glory of thy hair,
Like a fond hope fallacious, fades and dies?
Stabbed by the spear of empty prophecies,
Become the burthens, then, too hard to bear?
Or does the thought of realms thou must forswear
Flood thee, at eve, with these melodious sighs?
Or dost thou feel the intolerable weight —
The iron crown of hours on thy head? —
And, sadly glad, — as we at evening's gate, —
Smile in thy heart that thou shalt soon be dead,
Because the splendors of an earlier state
And Dreams auroran now are vanished?

LATER SONNETS

LOOKING SEAWARD

THE headland cliff within the outer bay
Rises uncertain through the distance dim ;
Its base is veiled, and faint the shadowy rim
Uplooms a spectre o'er the wastes of gray.
Ah, could I, from my bondage loosed to-day,
Leave the dull coast and o'er the ocean's brim,
Impelled by mine own longings, onward skim
To find a home within the Far Away !
Ah, had I but the wandering petrel's plume, —
Tireless and wild, and as the wind as free, —
Then would I bathe my wings anear thy base,
O Cliff unknown, and, where the rollers boom,
Forget the empty baubles that we chase,
And lose myself in being one with thee !

LATER SONNETS

IN THE VALLEY OF DREAMS

The bearers of my cups have served me well.

ELIZABETH STODDARD.

I YEARNED for knowledge and her starry beams, —
For radiance of imperial thought I sighed ;
The more I searched that shining shore and wide,
The further from me flowed the wondrous streams.
Then in the cave of sleep that dimly gleams
The rudder of volition slipped aside,
And night brought to me what the day denied —
The rich phantasmagoria of Dreams :
So one at noon, within a sunlit field,
Peers at the blank impenetrable sky,
To find his vision bounded as with bars ;
Then enters some deep shaft, and there on high,
Up through its tube of darkness, sees revealed
The imperishable splendor of the stars.

LATER SONNETS

SAMSON

BENT upon love, and beautiful as day,
Samson the youth to Timnath passed along ;
Musing of her, he hummed a desert song, —
When lo ! a lion barred his onward way.
Who would be victor in the unequal fray ?
He thought of love, and laughed that he was strong,
And conquered. Little did he deem, ere long,
That lion Passion him would heartless slay.
How many a man in youth's supremest hour
Who fells the lions in his path, will find
Some dread Delilah, as the years entice ;
Shorn of his will and of his pristine power,
He — following the primrose path of vice —
Falls with the falling temple of his mind !

LATER SONNETS

IN LEAF-DRIFTED AISLES

I LOVE to linger on the hill-side brown
When all the verdure of the year is dead, —
What time the sumac drops her darts of red, —
With some dear friend, far from the noise of town ;
And pacing slowly on the slopes, look down
Upon the dreamy islands that are wed
In bonds of blue together, while o'erhead
The glowing twilight settles as a crown.
Sweet as this is, yet I more dearly love,
Deep in the umber of the woodland ways,
Afar to wander, silent, and alone ;
For ah ! as through the dry leaves on I move,
I hear lost footsteps, loved in other days,
And voices touch me of the old sweet tone !

LATER SONNETS

ISOLATION

stood aside and watched the countless throng
Ascend the windings of the luminous street ;
Lovers were there whose pure and saintly feet
Kept rhythmic measure as they wound along.
Glad groups of little children played among
The fadeless flow'rs ; Madonna-mothers sweet
Cooed o'er their babes ; while from their golden seat
The harping choir sang some deathless song.
In midst of these, enlaurelled, but apart,
Dim forms paced slowly on and softly sighed
As though they searched for dreams beyond them flown :
The Poets they, who, each with aching heart,
Upon the earth had lonely lived and died,
And who, e'en there in heaven, seemed still alone.

LATER SONNETS

IN THE METROPOLIS

I LIKE not with the City's human stream
To be rushed onward, nor to hear the groan
Of restless, hurrying masses, avarice-blown
Along the streets, with trade their only theme :
How can the sylvan poet dream his dream
Amid the raging Babel round him thrown, —
Canyons of brick paved with reverberate stone,
The whirl of traffic, and the shriek of steam ?

But oh, far off from all the noise of these,
To pace the shores that to the soul belong,
In realms reclusive past the thought of care ; —
By the lone foam of sanctuary seas
To hear drift on, in deeps of sunset air,
The phantom caravels of deathless Song !

LATER SONNETS

ON PRESENTING A SONNET

POET, whose Muse beneath the southern vine
Hath trod where fond Alpheus softly flows
To join his Arethusa where she rose
In that famed Isle of olives and of wine ;
Thou who wast called by the Pierian Nine,
And lov'st the Enna shepherd as he goes
Fluting 'mid heifers where the herds repose,
Along the valleys lost to Proserpine ;
Thou who with rare Theocritus communed
In sweet Sicilian dales, far off and dim, —
Deign to accept this all unworthy lay
From one — least of the train whose harps are tuned
To Poesy — this page of Song, from him
Who loves like thee the Dorians passed away.

LATER SONNETS

A FLIGHT DOWNWARD

UPON vermillion ridges that upstand
High barriers between Hell and Paradise,
I stood beside the Angel, while mine eyes
Peered down into the ever-dreaded land
Where souls still bear the torment of the banned.
Then saw I there my love — whom in the skies
Of Heaven I thought — enduring agonies.
“Why is she there?” of him I made demand.
Then he, “God judged her guilty of a sin, —
Ages she has to suffer.” I replied, —
While in my eager ear he spake its name, —
“Lo, I will fly to earth from whence I came —
I will commit that crime, like doom to win,
And find my heaven in suffering by her side !”

LATER SONNETS

IN MEMORY OF
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

1892

No more our Nightingale shall sing his lay ;
The groves are mute, for he has taken flight ;
He whose mellifluous voice was our delight
Has, by his death, brought sorrow and dismay.
There is a beauty gone from out the day ;
There is a planet fallen from the night ;
A splendor is withdrawn from out our sight, —
A glory now for ever passed away.
A thousand hearts unused to bleed have bled,
And drops of pity dim the hard world's eye ;
And oh, what memories of the day-spring fled ! —
What vanished hopes, — what first love's ecstasy ! —
Ah, we have lost what time can ne'er supply,
For now the Poet of our Youth is dead !

L. 1892

LATER SONNETS

ESTRANGED

WITHIN the sunshine of your gracious smile
I spread my leaves and rapturously grew,
Rearing my towering branches to the blue
Because your nature seemed so sweet the while.
And though I would not your fair fame revile,
The current of your being which I knew
Has changed, and I am wasting from your view,
Worn by the slow abrasion of your guile.
So some alluvial island in mid-stream,
Bowery with elm and bending sycamore —
That kissed the summer waters in a dream —
Is, by a change of channel, made the prey
Of currents whose corrosions gnaw the shore
And waste it irretrievably away !

LATER SONNETS

ARRIVAL OF THE "WELCOME"

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST LANDING OF
WILLIAM PENN IN PENNSYLVANIA

How beautiful she looked in that far day
With all her canvas flying in the breeze, —
The stately "Welcome," from the stormy seas,
Wafted on dove-like wings along the bay !
"Peace on the Earth," her fluttering pennons say,
And from her deck a voice : "Good-will to men !"
For he had come, the courtly Quaker, Penn,
Full of his dream of philanthropic sway.

And must the feet of Progress ever be
Incarnadined by still recurring wars,
While from her path is swept each barbarous horde ?
Oh, may this Land, now under thrall of Mars,
End her red slaughter by the Asian sea,
And sheathe her once inviolable sword !

LATER SONNETS

A WINTER FLIGHT

I

WHEN wintry winds are howling round my home
On Appalachian uplands drear and white,
I love to spread my spirit's wing in flight
And through DeLeon's flowery land to roam.
I soar by Fernandina, where the dome
Is azure as our Summer's, or alight
Where inland Arredonian pines invite,
Or skim the marge by Sarasota's foam.
By Espanola many a moss-hung dell
Allures me onward o'er the sunny ground ;
I touch at Punta Gorda where the swell
Sways lazily the shipping, outward bound,
Or rest my wings awhile at Carrabelle
Near Apalachicola's silver sound.

LATER SONNETS

A WINTER FLIGHT

II

STILL yearning for a sight of other skies,
Across the Atlantic seeking stranger shores,
I touch a moment at the dim Azores,
Then onward wing to where Illyria lies.
On purple Zante soft the sunset dies,
And round the cape where Lamenaria soars
There comes a sound of song and dripping oars,
And Monemvasia from her cliff replies.
Sweet Falconera, — violet of the seas! —
Beckons from all her inlets deep and blue,
While Zëa whispers where her olive clings,
And voices call me, such as Circe knew,
Till I descend amid the Cyclades
And on the breast of Delos fold my wings.

LATER SONNETS

INVOCATION

I

O GUARDIAN of the sought-for sacred fire !
Mother of splendors springing from the mind !
Imperial Inventress ! let me find
Melodious solace great as my desire !
Grant me to waken thy impassioned lyre
To most mellifluent music, and unbind
The bands of silence ; oh, once more be kind,
E'en unto me, the least among thy choir !
Spirit of deathless Poesy and Dreams,
Stoop down above me all the day and night, —
Be ever near the while I draw this breath ;
Oh, flood me with thy visionary light,
And make me vocal with thy starry themes
Before the final aphony of death !

LATER SONNETS

INVOCATION

II

O BREATH of Godhead, voicing mysteries
That mortal men, unheeding, seldom hear,
Fain would my spirit bend a reverent ear
To feast upon Thy heavenly harmonies !
Come through the sunset gates, or on the breeze
Memnonian, murmur to me, spirit-clear ;
Breathe solace, and dispel this lifelong tear
By mystic music sweeter than the sea's !
Give to this essence flaming seraph wings,
Or burn it, incense-like, to Thee and Thine,
Upon Thy altar with its purging fire ;
Strike Thou at last from out these trembling strings
Apocalypses of the Inner Shrine —
O Breath of God ! make of my soul Thy lyre !

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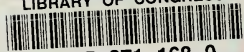




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